

By LaRue Cheney

When 150 members of the Kunz family of Switzerland gathered for a reunion this fall, it meant a real adventure for 35 family members. They were the Americans who flew to Switzerland for the event.

Among them was Donna (Kunz) Kennett of Paul and her daughter, Joni Kennett of Salt Lake City. And for Donna it was "full circle" when she arrived in Bern, Switzerland, for she was born in Bern, Idaho, and it was her first visit to native Switzerland which gave her hometown its name.

It seems that Donna's grandparents immigrated to Cache Valley, Utah, with the Mormon pioneers, and because of their skill with dairies and cheese making, they were sent to the Bear River country of Idaho (five miles west of Montpelier) where they established the town of Bern and raised cows, developed the land and made cheese.

After her three-week visit to Switzerland, Donna understands much better her grandfather's pride in his Simmental cows which were bred and developed by the Kunz family and which are sometimes called Kunz cows) and the family skill with dairies and cheese making.

One day in spring, the Simmentals are draped with flowers about the horns, owners dress in native costume, and lead the gentle herds to the high Alps for summer grazing. In the fall the same ceremony is repeated as the cattle are returned to the lower elevations. And Donna and the Kunz relatives were on hand in 1978 when a cousin brought down the cattle. It was a very colorful and thrilling ceremony.

The big adventure all began when an uncle traveled to Bern, Switzerland, earlier and there met a distant cousin who wanted to meet other family members. George (the uncle) came back home and began to arrange details, and managed to interest 35 family members in saving their money and planning the trip. He was helped by another relative with Murdock Travel Agency, and "this was the year to get it all together."

So on Sept. 20 they all gathered at the Salt Lake Airport and flew to Bern to meet the cousin. There a long list of adventures began.

The cousin has been a genealogist, has been hired to search out family histories, had coats of arms, and lots of records to show. He took them to castles in Switzerland, where he gave the history of each and informed each family of their connections. The entire experience has made family histories "come alive" for Donna, and she hasn't put them away since getting home. She visited the houses where

three of her grandparents were born.

Now the Swiss cousin is attending university in Bern, but he also continues his interest in family histories.

An unforgettable experience was "tea at the upper dairy" while visiting the Alps. The visitors were served mint blossom tea, and the housewife had gone up to the summer home early to make fresh hot bread. There was also paper-thin-sliced cheese to complete the tea.

Another night there was a "huge family home evening" on the shores of Lake Thun, food was roasted sausage and other Swiss foods, and a relative came to play the Alphorn which he had made. These are the long horns that look like a smoking pipe with the bowl resting on the ground. He wore native costume and the mournful sound of the horn on the lakeshore echoing among the high Alps will linger in the visitors' memories for years to come.

The actual family reunion took place at a ski lodge in Nuegg, with 140 Swiss relatives joining the Americans. A Swiss supper consists only of cold

sliced meats and breads. All they had was many varieties of the thin-sliced ham served with breads.

Breakfast consists of hot breads, butter, cheese, and coffee or tea, while the main meal is served at noon. This includes roast pork and chicken, a variety of vegetables, and dessert. They were served fizlarps (that's the way Donna and I spell it), like string beans "only different", and dessert was like a butterscotch sundae "only different."

The Americans hosted the evening meal, then they were presented a large cowbell on a leather strap (which a relative had spent most of the night making) — the size of the bell determines the age of the cow — the bigger the bell the older the cow. This souvenir is now in the possession of Uncle George but it is earmarked for the museum the family hopes to establish in Bern, Idaho.

In Bern the Kunz family visited the state house and archives and were greeted by the Chancellor (like our president), who was also a relative. He

presented each with a beautifully bound and illustrated book on Switzerland.

There were visits to cemeteries, dining out to sample different foods, many shopping trips, and observance of the farming methods. Like many American tourists are discovering these days, the Kunz family found that inflation has made touring extremely expensive.

Being on a budget, Donna was very careful about her souvenir buying, but she did indulge in a bratagely iron (it's like a waffle iron for making thin designed cookies). It cost her almost \$100 American.

Ordering from the menu in one restaurant, Donna stumbled across a dish she really liked — raclette. It consisted of melted cheese (like mozzarella) served on a hot plate and a basket of potatoes boiled in their jackets. These were peeled and sliced into the cheese. "Delicious!"

Several times the visitors ate wienerschnitzel, and they found that

Switzerland. They took their food to a park or onto the bus but did not eat in public.

Most farms are very small acreages and farming is along the very steep mountainsides. Since machinery is so expensive and impossible to use on the steep land anyway, the farming is mostly done by hand. They saw many husbands and wives putting up hay with a sickle. Everything is beautiful and clean, every house is covered with flowers, there are gardens and green everywhere.

Another high adventure was a ride in a cable car to Schilthorn in the Alps. It was cold, and there was snow. The cable line was built by helicopter, and the ride was "almost straight up." Donna admits that she was scared on the ride. They had to make four transfers to reach the top, where they found a revolving round-house restaurant, from which they could see Italy and France.

They rode the mountain railway that took them alongside four famous glaciers — Wetterhorn, Eiger, Jungfrau and Monch.

There was also time to visit Austria and Munich, then home from Zurich. Joni left the tour in Zurich to stay an extra 10 days to visit the area around Hamburg, Germany, where she was an exchange student on a summer program about four years ago.

There was one night in New York for a taxi tour of famous sites on the return journey, and in Salt Lake City, "stay at home" family members gathered with signs of greeting to welcome the travelers home.

The trip left a warm glow. But everything wasn't warm. "We nearly froze in those hotels," Donna says. There is no heat in the buildings and "oh! it's cold over there." There was no soap and no washcloths in most hotels, so she advises travelers to take those along.

But the little minor inconveniences are all forgotten now as the America relatives bask in memories of one family reunion to end all family reunions.